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An essay, on the probation
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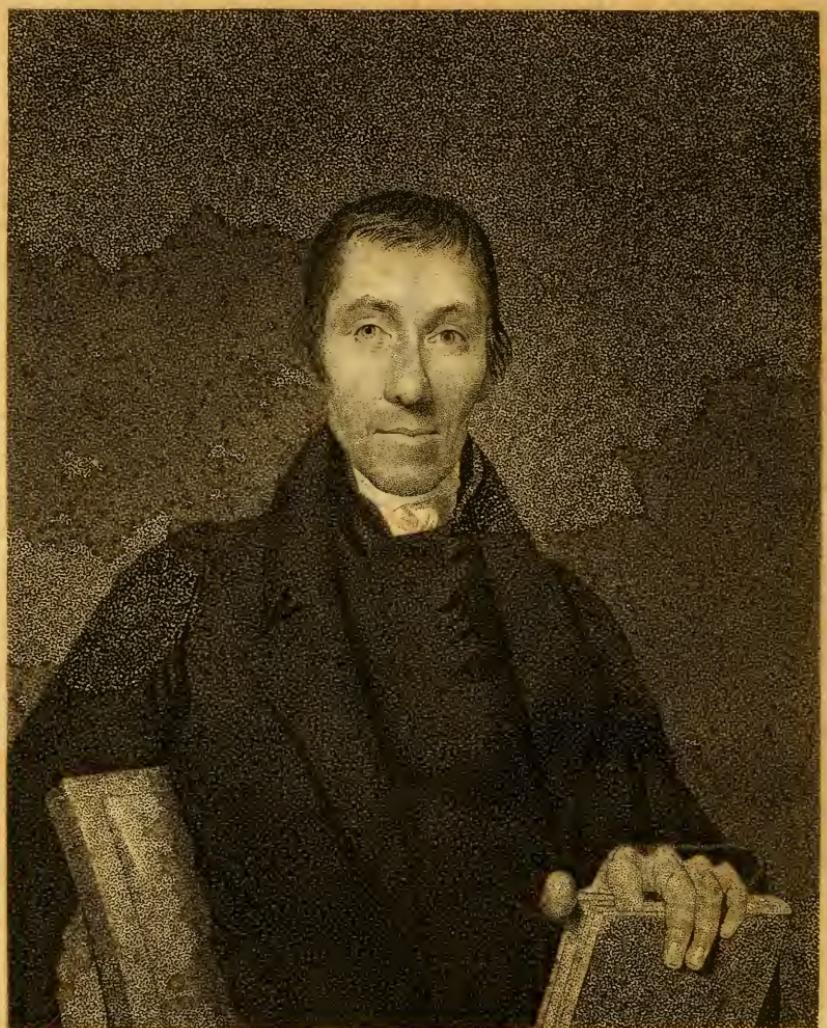
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JAMES P. WILSON D.D.

AN

ESSAY,

ON

THE PROBATION OF FALLEN MEN:

OR,

THE SCHEME OF SALVATION,

FOUNDED IN SOVEREIGNTY,

AND

DEMONSTRATIVE OF JUSTICE.

by James R. Wilson

ACTS, IV. 12.

PHILADELPHIA :

PRINTED BY WILLIAM F. GEDDES.

.....

1827.

Eastern District of Pennsylvania, to wit :

L. S. BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the sixth day of March, in the fifty-first year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1827, The Reverend James P. Wilson, D. D., of the said District, hath deposited in this Office the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as author, in the words following, to wit: "An Essay, on the probation of fallen men, or, the scheme of salvation, founded in sovereignty, and demonstrative of justice. *Acts iv. 12.*" In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, intituled "An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,"—and also to the Act entitled "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled 'An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,' and extending the benefit thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

D. CALDWELL,
Clerk of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

TO
THE MEMBERS
OF THE
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
IN THE
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA;
BRETHREN,

This essay has grown out of a sermon, commenced at your solicitation as a summary of those doctrines, which though vanishing with utterance must meet us at the bar of God.

To avoid interference with other churches, copies will be withheld; for it is neither to be dissembled, that diversities on minor points exist; nor, that they have found no where, less toleration, than at home; although the essentials of the gospel be proclaimed from every desk, and their fruits visible. Doctrines are in order to practice; where the heart is right,

zeal is tempered with knowledge, and a humble peaceful frame is the sure effect of the love of God and man. But our defect is of charity, not of truth.

The memorial you require, of the things in which we have walked together in perfect harmony, for more than twenty years, is necessarily a skeleton, the more unsightly because unclothed. As none are more competent to discriminate, the decision of things disputable has been in the public discourses generally submitted; the same caution we renew, and refer you to arguments on many of the doctrines, still fresh in your memories. Such judgment is your unalienable right; and its exercise is secured to you as individuals by public guarantee; but as a congregation there is not every security that is desirable.

Exemption from error is not our claim; and the condensation of so much variety can scarcely fail to discover discrepancies with the views of the reader; but it is hoped only in

things about which we may safely agree to differ. By you the mode of representation here given will be recognised; and better understood, than by others. To preach I have been laid under a necessity; this scheme of doctrines, has been adopted after much investigation; for myself, not for you; from the word of God, not the opinions of men; I have known no other way, and upon it cheerfully rest my own eternal interest.

Your demand of this summary, confessedly with a reference to the time of my departure, is to me a very solemn memento of my approaching change, of which I know neither the day nor the hour. But come when it will, the separation is, I trust, not final; and we may entertain the animating hope of meeting again, and of living together forever, in climes more congenial.

Your unworthy servant

in the gospel of peace,

JAMES P. WILSON.

Philadelphia, Feb: 8, 1827.

E S S A Y.

ACTS IV. 12.

“Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

THE transition of the speaker of this text, from cowardice to dauntless fortitude, from mean prevarication, to Apostolic magnanimity; and the change in the conduct of the council, from violence cruelty and murder, to caution timidity and silence under charges of flagrant criminality, are not unaccountable. Peter, animated by the recent visits and instructions of his triumphant Master, and newly clothed with the power and authority of the apostolic office, already experienced the

The ar-
raignment
of Peter and
John.

promised sustentation of the heavenly Comforter : providentially, his pusillanimous judges were appalled by the concealed, but irresistible evidence of the fact, that he, whom they had crucified, had actually arisen from the tomb. The consciousness of having bribed and dismissed the soldiers, and of not having dared to search for the body, which had been rescued by supernatural intervention from their possession, whilst they had every advantage for retaining it, had damped their mistaken zeal, and rendered them irresolute.

The unexpected intrepidity of the disciples, and the manifest exertion of divine power in the restoration of the lame man, conspired also to confirm their convictions and awaken apprehensions. To dismiss the subject without inquiry ; and though upbraided with the murder of the Messiah, to dissemble resentment, and discharge the Galileans with threats, which they feared

The coun-
cil over-
awed by their
knowledge
of the resur-
rection.

to execute, was wisdom ; but determined opposition to truth. For neither their ignorance of the proximate cause, nor the novelty of the occurrence, furnished a just reason, either for the denial of the report of their senses, or for the exclusion of the testimony of others. The miracle was undeniable, to parry its influence, and extinguish the light were their malicious aim ; and the success would have been complete, had not the disciples referred the restoration of the lame man, to the efficiency of Jehovah ; for, admit Jesus a malefactor, and the power not of God, Peter and John were capital offenders. To the demand, therefore ; “By what power, or by what name, have ye done this ?” Peter did not merely answer, “by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified ;” but wisely added, “whom God raised from the dead, by him doth this man stand here before you sound. This is the stone which, rejected by you builders, is become the head of the corner : and there

Christianity tolerated
only as Judaism.

is relief in no other.” Thus did he cautiously escape the danger couched in their insidious question, by referring the cure ultimately to the God of Israel ; and at the same time attribute to the miracle its own testimony, which it was designed to bear to the resurrection, power and authority of Christ. The God of nature is the Father of our spirits ; if the name of Jesus can restore a cripple, it is to evince, that he can save a soul. Passing to the subject of his commission, Peter announces to the murderers of Jesus, the possibility even of their obtaining life through him : “*for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved;*”

The nature
of the Sal-
vation by
Christ.

not from bodily, but spiritual maladies ; not from temporal, but eternal death ; not by controlling the laws of nature, but by satisfying the demands of justice, according to the eternal purposes of sovereign mercy.

This transition was perfectly natural, for

such afflictions were deemed, not in that age only, to be the effects of sin ; “Master who hath sinned—that this man was born blind ?” But in every generation misery has been referred to guilt ; and deliverance from both expected and sought in various modes from supernatural aid.

The Creator being the proprietor of all things, has erected governments, and distributes gifts and talents, as a *sovereign* bound to no equality in nature, grace, or glory. But the bestowment of understanding will and other faculties, constituting moral agency, was the assumption of the correlative character of a *Moral Governor* ; and a tacit pledge, that he will administer in righteousness, sustain the honour of his government, and never exercise sovereignty to the disparagement of justice. For all these, there is the utmost security also in the eternity and immutability of his purposes. Of such a government we are subjects ; and though neither ignorant of

The different characters of Sovereign and Moral Governor.

his rights, nor of our own correspondent obligations, we have violated them, and become obnoxious to his justice : the claims of which cannot be waved, nor the honour of his government suffered to be tarnished by our escape.

Sovereign-
ty will never
change the
terms to res-
cue the fal-
len.

Fallen angels have never found relief ; nor shall we be saved by any extension of mercy, not provided for in his immutable purposes.

The despised apostle proposed as the only door of hope, the very person whom this council had lately unjustly condemned and murdered, under the forms of justice ; the true Messiah, whom their fathers had expected ; and the sacrifice and ransom eternally provided for the sins of the world. His language being negative excludes direct proof ; nevertheless the truth of the important position may be established by an exhibition of *man's state of guilt, and of the scheme provided for his salvation.*

The degradation of our race is here, as usual, assumed. Even the light of nature

discovers it, for although extraordinary suffering will not in this world always evince proportional guilt ; yet the glory of divine justice requires the concomitance of happiness with innocence, and that moral evil should have been the precursor of the sufferings of rational creatures. The pleasures and pains of this life are of small importance, because of short and uncertain duration ; but in the next, the permanency of moral character, if no other reason could be shown, must render them extreme and ceaseless. Here we have too much sorrow for a state of happiness ; too much comfort for a state of punishment.

Misery, the effect and proof of sin.

That this is a preparatory stage of existence is testified by conscience, reason ; our fears, hopes, and desires ; and by the voice of every age, as well as by revelation. Moral corruption is rendered less perceptible by its universality, and a ruinous insensibility, in which the party perceives not his aggravated iniquity, nor ventures to plead perfect innocence. Neither

A state of trial, where justification by works is impossible.

general moral character, nor particular instances of good deeds, if they deserve the appellation, can possibly have for any man, the least weight in the question guilty or not guilty ; a single infraction must forever exclude a justification by law ; but where there is neither the love of God, nor of holiness, nothing has been done at any period, from proper motives and to proper ends.

Mere mo-
rality is A-
theism or
Idolatry.

Though man may not have lost, in a comparative sense, and in the judgment of the world, every good affection ; and may still be qualified, in point of natural faculties, to choose and obey, as well as to investigate theoretically religious truth ; yet is there a sense, in which he has lost entirely all righteousness ; and acting without regard to God and holiness, his morality, however praiseworthy, is atheism or idolatry.

Every creature, even of the highest order, is limited, and tends to decay. Such procliv-

ity to native nothingness was foreknown, but not created; it is necessary dependance. In like manner, privation of righteousness is neither a subject of creation, nor a physical constituent, though moral, certain, and foreknown.

Also because such defect was neither decreed, except hypothetically, nor created, but proceeds from the abuse of liberty, not physical incompetency, it is chargeable on man only, and is moral evil: whilst every thing physical in that which is called a transgression, being from God is good. These things are equally true with respect to the first moral delinquency charged by tradition and revelation on the parent of our race, and that native corruption, or destitution of righteousness, which brings upon all, transgression misery and death.*

Sin distin-
guished from
every thing
physical.

Since indisposition to holiness is a universal character of our nature; and infants inherit disease and death, the wages of sin: there

Deaths of
infants
prove obli-
gation to
punishment.

*Vide note A.

must exist some connexion between us and our first parent, whereby we are justly introduced, into the world, in his image and lapsed state, without our choice. This doctrine is plainly asserted in the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans and elsewhere; nevertheless it does not follow, that any dying in infancy are lost; since their salvation by Christ is more than possible.

Those who survive the period of infancy and die impenitent adults, were non-elect. Non-election is not a decree, unless it be a decree not to decree, nor is it a positive idea. To choose one of a thousand, implies nothing positive as to those passed by. To say that the consignment of men to eternal misery without desert is founded in right, is to say that Deity has a right to be unjust. But to purpose to punish for sin is as proper, as to pass the sentence. Both belong to the character of the righteous Governor. Neither proceeds from the arbitrary pleasure of a

No repro-
bation from
mere sove-
reignty, but
for sin only.

Sovereign, who is such in his gifts only. The case of those who die in infancy, is wholly different from that of those, who are unwilling to accept the terms of mercy, sincerely offered. To such no injustice is done, even when the Sovereign confers his favours on others, no worse than themselves ; because injustice is the violation of a right, and all are alike without claim.

Defection, whatever loss it brought, neither deprived man of the physical powers necessary to obedience, nor of his capability of enjoying God, nor of his obligation to seek him. But the antecedent provision of redemption, in the eternal purposes of the Sovereign, evinces, that his justice, as the rectoral Governor of the universe, could not otherwise have spared man. Thus our degradation in Adam, and the redemption in Christ, are counterparts of the stupendous scheme of the reconciliation of sinners.

Fall and
redemption
counterparts.

Why fallen
angels are ir-
recoverable.

Angels, who are rational creatures, and moral agents of a higher grade, and larger powers, were designedly put upon trial, as well as the human race, but in a different manner. Created holy, they stood each for himself. Their liberty and dependance as creatures, rendered them liable to defection. Some retained their innocence, and others fell. A justification of angels, in the forensic sense of the term, by the law which they had broken, was and must ever remain impossible ; for it implies the highest imputation on justice, since it would be no less, than to pronounce the guilty innocent. Not only is justice an insurmountable obstacle ; but the tendency of sin to alienate the mind, and to prevent the influence of moral motives, still renders the damned more hostile, and will effectually bar their return.

Final cause
of creation.

Angels and men were created for the same end. That declarative glory of the Creator, which may be supposed to have been the chief

end, or final cause of creation, was not merely display to creatures, but of his own designs to himself.* His knowledge of future events is not an effect, creation is the image of his eternal purposes, and reflects himself to himself; for it is what he had previously designed, and can be neither an augmentation of his knowledge, nor of his happiness. Had the diffusion of good to creatures, been his highest glory and pleasure, no degradation, no misery, had obtained. For man to prefer himself, is to mistake the chief good. For the Supreme to postpone himself, would be equally an error. All his creatures rank, in excellence, according to the degree, in which they exhibit to himself his own perfections.

The nature
of the divine
knowledge.

His gifts are various; angels were tested by their perseverance in innocence; the test of the human race, was to be their return from sin, by the acceptance of salvation through a redeemer. To effect this, both

Our state
of trial, un-
like those of
angels, and of
Adam.

*Vide note B.

the fall, and the ransom, were indispensably necessary. A holy God would create no being in sin. Nor could the sin of any creature, be the effect of either decree, or causation ; for sin is nothing positive. But though it could neither be created, nor absolutely decreed, it might nevertheless be certain in event, without laying the party under any necessity. Man's degraded condition was designed as the punishment of sin, but it is incomparably better, than if every one had stood for himself. Had each human agent broken the law of his God, and no provision existed for his recovery, the race must have been like the fallen angels, without remedy. But every event with respect to man, falls in with the great design of redemption, which was fully in the view of the Supreme, in all eternity.

Creation
and provi-
dence ancil-
lary to re-
demption.

That such a scheme, or plan for the restoration of men, was contemplated before the creation, is clear from the subserviency to it

of primitive innocence, the formation of the woman, the paradise, sabbath ; the degradation, ejection, and curse of the first man : and descent of the race from him ; from the gradual progress made in its development ; the harmony of its various parts ; the astonishing wisdom of the things, which seem most objectionable ; and above all, from the perfections of the Creator. The distinct perception of the prominent features of this stupendous design, and of their relations to each other, must greatly contribute to confirm our faith, and fortify us against the seductions of error. Such an outline Timothy had obtained from Paul ; “ Hold fast the *sketch of the picture of salutary doctrines* which thou hast heard from me.”(a) The purpose to create man intelligent moral and consequently under law, discerning good and evil, and to place him and his race in a state of forfeited happiness, cut off from all possibility of restoration by the merit of his obedience, were but parts of the

A previous, defined plan.

(a) 2 Tim. i. 13. *υποτυπωσις—υγιανογλων.*

scheme of reconciliation ; which comprehended also the final judgment, to reveal the righteousness of the administration, and vindicate the honour of the divine government.

Man's trial
more eligible
than that of
angels.

From the first exercise of reason, we have the whole of this precarious life in which to escape from sin and its effects, and obtain a humble claim to that happiness, which has been seasonably provided for us through the great substitute ; for justice forbids, that we, more than fallen angels, should be justified by a broken law. For want of such provision, they are hopeless ; and from us salvation is excluded in every way, but that of the “name” of Christ : “ All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

The position in the text, that there was no other name, or mean of salvation, was to the priests a condemnation of their sacrifices daily

offered in the temple, a rejection of the boasted righteousness of the Pharisees, and the utter abandonment of every hope of a messiah yet to come. By it also we learn, that repentance is no retribution ; that faith, love, and all other duties are inadequate to that end. The debt, which man has contracted, is infinite ; for the obligation violated is commensurate with divine excellency. In himself there is neither help, nor hope ; nor even a disposition to return, except for advantage. To imagine, that mere mercy or pardon, irrespective of the demands of law and justice, can be extended to guilty man, is a mistake, springing either from the substitution of a sovereign benefactor in the place of a just governor, who never departs from strict rectitude ; or from a comparison of the divine government, with those which are human. The subjects may be the same, and human laws may be consistent with divine : but by reason of their universality, they may produce injustice in particular cases : or be found unreasonable

Mere par-
don incon-
sistent with
perfect gov-
ernment.

and oppressive in their application. Judges may be defective in jurisprudence ; or prejudiced ; or even corrupt ; the evidence may be false, or concealed, or misinterpreted ; or the execution of a sentence might be incompatible with the public weal. In such circumstances, justice, or sound policy, or both, may require the discharge of a convict. But these, and such reasons, have no place in the perfect government of God ; nor can just ground for pardon, absolutely considered, either exist under, or accord with the honour of a divine administration. By the Supreme Ruler of the universe, his laws are perfectly understood, and seen to be conformed to his own character, in moral excellence ; every fact is known ; all effects are foreseen ; and his judgments are always right. The possibility of error or impropriety in Him, being utterly excluded, immutable justice is pledged by the honour of the government, in every sentence. To be justly accountable, men have been created intelligent, the subjects of

Pardon is
injustice and
excluded.

motives, able to distinguish good and evil, informed of their duty, and warned of the danger consequent upon the neglect of it; but if after all, the guilty might escape, the strongest motives would lose their influence, and the wisdom and the rectitude of the King of heaven must be compromised; the thought of which is to be abhorred. When the scriptures speak of pardon, they describe the anticipation of our helpless condition in the eternal purposes, the gratuitous provision of the sacrifice of Christ, and the accomplishment and promulgation of that redemption, whereby God has made it just and honourable, to save the guilty. But if pardon could have been extended, without regard to the claims of justice, the Son of God has taken our nature in vain. If it could have been granted absolutely, why should fallen spirits have been so long detained by justice? Mere mercy without a solid reason for pardon, is not discretion but caprice, and would disparage the character even of a mortal ruler.

The scriptural sense of pardon.

No appeal can be made to the sovereignty of God, when he acts as a moral governor.

If threatened punishment is empty sound, and judges are under no obligations to observe and enforce laws, why are penalties inflicted in any instance? Abraham would have spared Sodom; was he more merciful than God? But the honour of his government is in safe hands, and will certainly be vindicated. His laws must be executed, his purposes accomplished, nor shall his truth fail, though the heavens and the earth should pass away.

The descent of the Son of God to this
 speck in creation, and his assumption of our
 nature to save man, may appear to superficial
 reflection, unworthy of so great a personage.
 But the ideas of great and small are peculiar
 to us, and have no place with Him, who is
 infinite; a sparrow, could it drop unnoticed,
 would involve his character. In the field of
 creation, not an insect escapes his view.
 Should the philosopher forget the orb on
 which he stands, it has nevertheless the at-
 tention of infinite wisdom, and the support of

The incarnation was glory.

irresistible power. Let the superciliousness of puny infidels abandon our race to despair ; angels will not fail to celebrate in songs the rescue of the redeemed ; whilst they behold God himself, searching out and restoring the lost sheep, and manifesting perfections, which otherwise might have remained to his creatures forever unknown.

His justice, unerringly exact, is limited by rules which are eternal. Mercy, any more than reprobation, can never be extended by sovereignty to the disparagement of equity. For though the universal proprietor may do with his own as he pleases ; yet being immutably good, he will never exercise such right, except in conferring good, and that in perfect consistency with the uncompromising claims of rectitude, and truth.

The only way by which, man, considered as fallen, could escape, was by substitution ; the thing announced by Peter to his guilty

Justice and
mercy are
not arbitrary
acts towards
man.

judges; but this must be a part of the original scheme, eternally purposed. No alteration has obtained in the design; redemption is the most prominent feature, and glorious event, in the government of the Father, and "*according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*" No injustice was offered, in his tremendous suretiship, to the Son; "*lo I come, I delight to do thy will.*" The trial of our race was not to be by innocence, but deliverance; law must exist, but it was posterior unto, and enacted in compliance with the eternal purpose, that "*Christ should be its end,*" or scope, "*for righteousness to every one that believes.*"

Substitution
consistent
with justice
and law.

The substitute for human obedience was the lawgiver himself; the Copartaker of the nature of the Father, did, as man, submit to his own law; the highest honour possible to be conferred upon it. Conceding that neither our sins could be transferred to him, to make

him unholy ; nor his righteousness to us, thereby infusing moral purity into us ; nevertheless he might, by an original constitution, take our place, be treated, as if guilty, and die, "*the just for the unjust,*" that we might be blessed as if righteous. And if so, no reasonable ground of complaint can be brought against this vicarious sacrifice, either with respect to its purpose, or accomplishment. Law was made, and written on the heart of man, in subserviency unto the scheme of redemption ; and can no more contravene the eternal design, than by-laws can supersede a charter ; or the laws of a state repeal the constitution, or bill of rights, upon which the government is founded.

The purpose of redemption was paramount to law.

The divine nature of the Son was neither confined to, nor confounded with the human soul and body of Christ ; but was after the personal union every where present, as he now is; being still in the Father and the Father in him. The properties of either

The vicarious righteousness was human.

nature are occasionally predicated of the person, yet the human nature only could suffer and obey. His essential righteousness as God, was not that by which we are saved; but his human righteousness, including the sacrifice, was the purposed substitution. The two natures constituted one divine person as truly, and comprehensibly, as do soul and body the person of a man. From his conception the union existed; *though he hid his face from us*; and his obedience was ever that of a divine person, and of infinite value. Could his righteousness have become the personal righteousness of the believer, there would be no need of sanctification. It served the higher and eternal design of justification; and to satisfy law and justice, was necessarily perfect; but the saint feels his defects, so long as he lives. The value of the sacrifice depended not principally, upon the intensity of the sufferings however great; but upon this, that he was a divine person. Impartial investigation can put to silence, every objection

The righte-
ousness of
Christ is not
transferred to
the believer.

against this salvation, drawn by reason from the divine and human characters, if the representations of the New Testament were considered merely as human testimony; but they bear the characteristics, in all respects, of a revelation, which came from God.

Had a creature of the highest order undertaken, he had had no right to lay down his life, no power to resume it; no dignity commensurate with the guilt of men; and no authority from a substitution founded in the eternal purposes providing a legal relief. But Christ "*hath an unchangeable priesthood, wherefore he is able also to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*"*

The mediator must be divine.

If the inspired apostle Peter, directing himself immediately to the murderers of Christ, could affirm their salvation to be only in him,

*Vide note C.

whom they had slain, and whom God had raised from the dead; to whom may not the same offer be made? The value is enough for all, the invitation sincerely tendered to every one to whom it is brought, and the commission to proclaim it, paramount to the commandments of men. But though Christ *tasted death for every man*; the claims of justice are not removed from those who reject the mercy, or neglect to avail themselves of the only salvation, through the sinful aversion of their own hearts.

Christ "tasted death for every man."

Every event proceeding immediately from God previously existed in his purposes, and is therefore strictly conformed to his fore-knowledge; infinite wisdom and power, with equal facility also, when using the instrumentality of voluntary agents, can and do secure the same certainty of accomplishment, in ways compatible with their liberty. Thus although the ransom be offered sincerely to all, and being of infinite value is sufficient for

the whole; yet all will not be found to have partaken of the redemption; and this event was equally founded in the eternal foreknowledge. Christ bore the curse of the law, the lost are not rejected for defect in him, but their own; they voluntarily reject the mercy, and still remain under the curse. All may, but they will not come; who shall and who shall not be saved, is neither known to others, nor always to themselves; but God communicates the blessing as a sovereign, doing with his gifts as he pleases; and because all are wholly unworthy, and with one consent opposed to salvation, none have any claim on justice, and none any right to complain of injury. Those who voluntarily receive and rest upon Christ for salvation, use their own liberty, and save themselves; but as liberty never destroys dependence, either in providence or grace, the same are the called and justified; and are so united to Christ, as that by his satisfaction of the demands of justice against them, they are upon principles already mentioned, notwith-

The sacri-
fice is indefi-
nite, redemp-
tion is limit-
ed.

Mercy flows
from sove-
reignty, judg-
ment from
justice.

standing their sins, treated as if they had been righteous, and such they will be found, with respect to their works wrought in faith, in the the last account, compared with the lost.

Law being
predicated on
the scheme of
redemption,
can claim no
more.

Those who consider redemption as an amendment of a broken scheme, and not the chief design; and the substitution as a repeal of law; and vindicate its propriety independently of the antecedent provision in the eternal purpose, deem the sacrifice of Christ necessary to satisfy its penalty, and his obedience as designed to perform its condition, and secure a title to life. But if there has been no change of scheme, there seems to be no necessity for the distinction; also in fact, he obeyed in suffering, and suffered in obeying. It was the eternal purpose, to put fallen man upon trial, and treat him as a moral agent, to place before him everlasting happiness, and demand his escape; when he believes, there is a removal of his guilt, that is his obligation to punishment; and by the Holy Spirit he is made fit for heaven, that to God might belong all the glory of salvation.

Man was from the first a subject of divine government; and as such he is bound to obedience, so long as he possesses his intellectual and voluntary faculties, whether a glorified saint, or a damned spirit; his rule of action must depend upon his relations, the will of his maker prescribing what he ought to do, or forbear.* Nevertheless, it was at no period possible since the fall, that any one should live by his obedience, but only by him, who was promised in Eden, and crucified on Calvary.

Obligation
of law con-
tinues whilst
our relations
are the same.

The good man may be justified, or adjudged among men to be righteous, by his obedience to law; but the heart being concealed, and the law spiritual, such acquittal is no certain proof of true rectitude. The purest holiness of the believer, in the sight of him, who knows the secret motives and desires, from which our actions flow, is defective; and justice forbids, that we should be adjudged to be what we are

Justification
before men.

*Vide note D.

Works rewarded to believers.

not. The works of the redeemed will nevertheless, under all their imperfections, receive a gracious reward, but if it be claimed as a right, then are we not innocent; and for the impenitent to substitute the most plausible morality in the room of the atonement, is open rebellion. No doctrine is more plainly given in the sacred word, than, that in the presence of God, no fallen creature can be justified by his own goodness; and sovereignty will never extend mercy, where justice is not satisfied, for their provinces are perfectly defined.

The final judgment not glorious unless just, and if it will be just, so was the purpose, which produced it.

In eternity, justification in Christ was in purpose; in time, it is the act of God, and known by its fruits; and at the judgment, its righteousness will be revealed to the universe; yet is it in the last day a comparative judgment on works, to justify former judgments, passed upon the same persons. It might be incompatible with the present state of probation, to discover the justice of God, in his adjudications; and since in the final account

it must be seen, that all, that had been done in rejecting the wicked, was perfectly just; then it will also appear, that it could not have been unjust to have intended to do the same thing from eternity. This thought may well put to silence incautious objections to what are called, in reference to human affairs, the decrees of God.

To save from the guilt of sin, or remove the obligation to punishment, is to justify; which is not to pronounce innocent, this is the forensic sense, but to restore to justice, her claim stipulated in Christ, and to treat the offender, as if he were righteous. Of course the justifier can be God only; the blood of Christ the appointed ground; and his resurrection from the dead, both the proof of his own justification, and of all who believe; for it evinced that this sacrifice was accepted, and that he laid down his life, as he said, for the sins of the world.

Justification
in the foren-
sic sense, im-
possible to
the guilty.

A vicarious sacrifice supposes a previous purpose of substitution.

To be *justified by his blood*, or *saved in him*, implies a previous purpose, without which his *offering*, *sacrifice*, or dying under a *curse*, could not have been deemed a *ransom* or price, whereby men might receive redemption from the guilt and bondage of sin, and salvation from its effects. And such purpose of substitution, must not only have been, of one qualified in the manner before mentioned; but have existed prior to the creation, and consequently before there was a law given to man, or the threatening of death for its infraction. A substitution after a forfeiture, would have been a departure from justice, a repeal of the law, and equally irreconcilable with the scheme of creation, as with the discriminations of the moral sense. But now there has been no change of purpose, the justice of God is safe; and the law being enacted and promulgated upon such terms, and interpreted by them, retains no curse for the redeemed; but if taken by itself, and without such constitution, it would bring them, as well as the

How the law is satisfied in behalf of the saved.

impenitent, into condemnation. Thus the honour of the government is maintained, as originally designed; the wisdom of God seen to be perfect; and the whole universe will approve the mercy, and the justice of God, in the salvation of man.

This “*name*,” or person, was the seed promised in Eden; believed on by Abel, and the worthies of all ancient times; the anti-type of the sacrifices of every age; foretold by Moses, and other prophets; ushered in at the appointed time, accompanied by every characteristic, which was suitable; confessed in every baptism; exhibited in every eucharist; preached throughout the world; the medium of access in all worship; and ever present with his church, till he shall come to reveal the righteousness of God, and to take his people to the kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world.

“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”

A mischievous, but highly wrought theory

exists, which accounts the first advantages of redemption, to be merely objective, in such

The scheme
of antece-
dents, and con-
sequent bles-
sings.

antecedent blessings, as an external call, a church, and all the visible means of salvation; and when by believing, repenting, and doing good, we render them subjective, we are rewarded with the *consequent blessings* of pardon, adoption, and eternal happiness. According to this interpretation of spiritual, by external and typical things, there is good in creatures, which is not the gift of God; man is not made willing, but renders God willing; has no need of a change by divine immediate influence; and may either defeat God's purposes, or accomplish, what was to him unknown: neither the scheme of providence, nor redemption, being determinate and complete, in the view of the creator, it must result, that God is imperfect, we are idolaters, and atheism is truth.

Grace, mere-
ly objective,
transfers the
glory to man.

If salvation be objective, and grace merely suasive, not efficacious: then man's volitions

are not means in God's hand, to effect his designs, but contingent self-determinations, foreseen by him, by the moral character of which, he determined the destiny of every man in eternity. But this, waving the contradiction implied in the certain foreknowledge of that, which is uncertain, is to suppose divine knowledge to be of the same kind, with that of creatures; yet facts evince that man's is derived from its objects; whilst all things spring, and every event results, from purposes and knowledge which are eternal. It is also a rejection of the efficiency of the eternal wisdom and power of God, which accomplish all events, according to original designs; and an abandonment of salvation by Christ, except in name, by supposing man to be independent, meritorious, and his own saviour.

Others, whilst they acknowledge the divinity of Christ, and the necessity of an atonement; and inculcate with ardour the duties of faith, repentance, and obedience; and speak

The sacrifice of Christ is more than a merely moral mean.

much of the grace of God ; do nevertheless consider, that the death of Christ, was only a great moral mean, or powerful motive, to bring guilty men to submission ; and to produce that repentance, which they term a condition, to the performance of which they imagine salvation promised. This scheme, however pleasing to those, who take intellectual and moral science as a guide, will appear, when tested by the word of truth, a merely gratuitous hypothesis ; really frustrating the grace of God ; removing the necessity of an atonement ; and compromising the dignity of the Rectoral Governor, by yielding the inviolable demands of stern justice, and listening to appeals made to sovereign mercy. To prevent such abandonment of the rights of his government, and the public guarantee he had given to support its dignity, Christ died.

*Justification
is more than
pardon, it is
the sentence
of justice.*

Others depart from the apostolic faith, by strangely deeming salvation to be mere pardon. Thus do they exclude, except in name,

the doctrine of justification, and with it the stupendous scheme of redemption, the astonishment and song of the blessed, openly avowing, that they do not pretend to affirm, that the sacrifice of Christ could be a satisfaction of the claims of justice against us. Yet we learn, that *God is just* when he justifies the guilty*; and certainly upon principles controlling the letter of that law, which pronounces us guilty. Their mistake seems to be the extension of sovereignty to the disparagement of justice; but the honour of the moral government of God must not be tarnished. It is also not discernible, how Christ should be to them, the object of a saving faith, or more than a nominal sacrifice for sin.

Perfection excludes mutability, and consequently affection, and passion; also internal excitement, and external impulse, have no place in God; yet the source of every good may well be denominated *love*; and his justice

In what sense
God is love.

*Vide note E.

really goodness, guided by wisdom. All happiness is communicated by Him, but we must not magnify his benevolence indiscreetly, as if the good of the creature ought to rise paramount to the glory of God. We shall misinterpret his own revelation, if, instead of referring the atonement of Christ to the mercy of God, in providing for the satisfaction of the claims of justice; we should lay justice out of the question, and attribute our salvation to mere benevolence, issuing forth pardon as an act of sovereignty, under the broad seal of heaven; and thus superseding the necessity, and consequently the propriety of that sacrifice, which takes away the sins of the world. Salvation does flow from God's benevolence, who is independent in his love; and his sovereignty is displayed in the communication of good; but he sustains another character, that of a moral governor. And as his justice can never be swerved to the improper exercise of his power and wisdom; so cannot his glory be compromised,

Salvation is
not a final
cause.

by the extrajudicial extension of mercy to the guilty.

Pride, connatural to man, renders him righteous in his own eyes; and sometimes prompts him either to arrogate the glory of salvation; or to deny that the blame of his destruction, is justly chargeable upon himself.

The multitude in every age, because conscious of liberty, secretly reject, what they nominally confess, a dependance on the providence and grace of God; and rest securely, in ignorance of themselves, upon their own imaginary innocency. It is indeed true, that man is subject, neither to a constraint, nor restraint, incompatible with moral agency; for then would he cease to be, responsible to the claims of justice, and the victim of remorse, when arraigned at the bar of his own conscience.

Man's liberty is not independence.

Whom the Lord justifies, he renews by changing the heart; which sanctified dispo-

Moral inability is mere indisposition.

sition, has been improperly denominated moral ability; and the opposite, because of certain figurative expressions used in the scriptures, moral inability; but there is no want of power, that can excuse, for there is no other imputable inability, than indisposition. He who formed and sustains the soul, and knows the thoughts, has power; and through the sacrifice of Christ, just right, at his sovereign pleasure to renew the dispositions of the redeemed, and thus by accomplishing in them, what they ought to effect, and had no right to claim, fit them for his own presence.

Spiritual influence distinguished from faculties, and other talents.

He gives to all, in different degrees, the natural faculties of perceiving, and comparing evidence, and eliciting truth; of distinguishing good and evil, and choosing either; for these they are to account, as well as for all other talents, in proportion to their extent, but no farther. The influences of the Holy Spirit, are denominated grace, because purely

gratuitous; they supply the want of a heart, not a defect of power, of which there is enough. These are not talents, and admit no improvement. For the influences of the Holy Spirit, no account will be demanded; they are God's work, and always effectual to the extent of the divine purpose; never objects perceivable by him, who is the subject of them, except in their effects. The natural abilities of men are as fit for good, as evil; and make them moral, because voluntary agents, bound to choose the duty, which God has assigned them, and justly punishable for their own delinquencies. When the Lord makes us willing, it is not by destroying our liberty; for we choose without compulsion. The will of every one, operates according to his nature, or disposition; if this be good, the choice is good; if it be evil, the will inclines to evil. When the Lord makes man willing, it is not intended of the providential support, of a dependant, yet active creature, it is by changing his

How men
are made wil-
ling without
restraint.

The holiness
of man is not
meritorious.

disposition and removing his prejudices against good. When the choice is evil, it is from motives which accord with the alienated heart. Holiness in man, viewed in its origin, is ever the gift of God; yet not in His sight the exact contrast of sinfulness, in point of merit and demerit; it is fit the rectitude of the saint should justify him before men, for he acts freely; but it can claim no reward, except by favour, in the sight of Him, who gave the disposition; for man is to be *justified* there, *without deeds of law*. When treated as if righteous, upon the plan of the Gospel, his obedience to law, or inherent righteousness, is not the cause. The eternally purposed substitution of Christ, is the sole ground of his legal acceptance; and to declare it a valid justification, belongs to God only; consequently, the evidence of present interest in redemption, can only be by its concomitant blessings, faith, and other fruits.

Faith is used in various senses in the

Gospel; when enjoined as a duty, it never justifies as such. That which accompanies salvation, includes the assent of the understanding to the evidence, or a conviction, of revealed truth; the consent of the heart to moral good, howsoever presented; and also an affiance on, or at least an acquiescence in, and cleaving unto the Saviour: and is not a naked assent, a mere profession of Christianity; not even a desire to be Christ's, flowing from a regard to safety; not baptism, and a good life; not the firm belief that Christ is our redeemer, and his benefits secure to us; it being one thing *to receive and rest upon him, as offered to us*, and quite another to believe that we do believe; to which the vilest can sometimes attain.

| Of the faith,
which accom-
panies salva-
tion.

As it was by descent from Adam, we inherited moral destitution, condemnation, and death; so is it by our union unto Christ, that we obtain rectification of heart, salvation from the guilt, and punishment of sin, and live for-

ever. (a) The word, which testifies our danger and helplessness, also declares his ability and willingness to save us. He who accredits this testimony, and receives, and rests upon the Redeemer, has the evidence of his union to and interest in him ; “*as many as received him, to them gave he the privilege to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name.*” In the kingdoms of providence and grace, the same Sovereign is the source of all the good ; from him comes *every good gift* in the former, and *every perfect* in the latter. We are debtors for every advantage we possess, whilst to him belongs all the glory. Although dependant at all times, and never able to defeat his purposes ; yet are we, not mere machines, but subjects of his moral government, possessing the faculties suited to his service, and responsible for their exercise. Our native indisposition to holiness, figuratively denominated moral inability, to distinguish it from that which excuses, superin-

The believer has, in his change of heart, the credible evidence of forgiveness.

duces both a slavery to sin, and an enmity against God; and if persisted in through our period of trial, must eventuate in a final separation from all good.

That *faith is the gift of God*, is a proverbial, not a scriptural expression,* often rehearsed as an excuse for unbelief, by those who bear him no regard. The belief of the divine testimony, and the proper use of the means of salvation, unquestionably imply a change of disposition, which an unrenewed man will not, and moral suasion can not effect. The Holy Spirit being under no obligation, to confer that disposition, which we ought to possess; such influence is wisely, and for our admonition, called *grace*. But this is unhappily considered an ability or power, whilst all that is meant is no more than a disposition, or heart to use those powers we already possess, in a right manner and to proper ends.

How faith
is the gift of
God.

* Ephes. ii. 8. *τούτῳ that thing*, viz. your salvation.
Vide tamen, Col. ii. 12.

If any man think to allege this moral defect as his excuse at the final tribunal; prudence suggests, that he should try his defence, before he is placed at a bar from which there is no appeal; when the *harvest* will be *past*, and *summer ended*, and all the offers of mercy clean gone forever. Should he now clothe his plea, in language, the substance would be; “Having been brought into existence without my consent, I may hate my Creator, his laws, and government, and prefer the gratification of the appetites, he has given me; and so strong is my indisposition toward him, that I am determined of my own deliberate choice, never to repent, believe, obey nor love him till he change my heart, and make it my pleasure to serve him; and because I am such, as he has made me, and he could change my disposition if he would, I am not guilty of the things laid to my charge.” This popular

Prudence
requires an
anticipation
of our last
account.

The conse-
quences of
making sin a
want of pow-
er.

defence is a renunciation of the supreme authority of the Creator, a denial of the obligation of his laws, an impeachment of his jus-

tice, and an attempt to devolve man's guilt upon a holy God. All this blasphemy springs from confounding disposition, or propensity, with faculty, or ability, and taking the Saviour's figurative representation of our criminal aversion to holiness, in a literal sense, as a want of power.

A persuasion that we desire and strive, pray and go the round of duties, is no proof of these facts; for the heart may be wanting. To complain, on the other hand, that we are destitute of the power necessary to holiness, is additional iniquity. For if by power, we mean either the physical faculties, understanding, will, &c. or the ability to exercise them at our pleasure, we have such power; or if we intend by that term, opportunity or advantage for serving God; the defect would excuse; but we possess this, since the motives and inducements are abundant, and as strong, as that liberty admits, which is essential to moral agency. But if by power, inclination

Importance
of a just idea
of power.

be meant, and this is all the inability, it never excuses.

There is
no religion,
where the
heart is want-
ing.

The expres-
sions, special
and common
grace, never
occur in the
Scriptures,

The heart is that which fixes the moral character, this is the man; for what this is, he is. It consequently follows, that his reluctant prayers, strivings, and duties, being objects of his aversion, are the reverse of religion. When therefore the Lord, withholding his sanctifying influences, leaves such in spiritual death, he conforms to their own real wishes, and their complaints are unjust. The supposition that to every man is given common grace, that is, faint and ineffectual influences subordinated to human caprice, which, unless he resists them, cause him to believe with his heart, seems to have arisen from a misunderstanding of expressions used for objective strivings. Neither the word of God, rightly understood, nor reason, nor matter of fact, supports the distinction of special and common influences of the spirit. This would attribute to man the honor of his salvation,

which is not his due, and turn favour into debt. If man improves grace, then he is independent in such use of influences, and here is a good which is not from God. But if such improvement is also from him, the distinction is useless. The truth seems to be, that on this point christians differ because they are not mutually understood. Liberty should be predicated, not of the will, but of the man; and what more can any desire than that, which we cheerfully yield, that if man were either subjected to constraint or restraint, his responsibility would be destroyed.

Liberty is
not of the
will, but of
the man.

This imagined equality in the influences of the Spirit, whereby men are supposed to be treated justly; and to be saved, when they do not, and lost when they do resist the grace of God, is a doctrine flattering to the carnal mind; but impeaches the divine sovereignty, by imposing an obligation, and demanding without right, that of the justice of God, which is conferred, or withholden at his plea-

Different
senses of the
word grace.

sure. But if grace be taken for the offers of mercy, and means of salvation by Christ, it is resistible, and such resistance, persisted in, must destroy. Thus Stephen observed, “*Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.*” Also grace and duty are often convertible terms. The duties of the gospel, such as faith, hope, and love, may be resisted, and such resistance must prove fatal. But when performed with the heart, they result from spiritual influence, are God’s gift, and accompany salvation. Also the Holy Spirit may graciously restrain without sanctifying a sinner, who sins in every act and thought. But grace, taken to denote the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God upon the soul, which are internal, and imperceptible, not objects of choice, nor talents, either to be improved or accounted for, in the final judgment, is neither the product of human effort, nor the subject of previous intimation; but, making the party willing, excludes resistance; and must be in every one, to whom it is given, efficacious, to the extent

of the divine purpose. Those, therefore, who found the justice of the divine command of holiness, upon the possession of a common spiritual influence, assume, what facts do not support, and teach an independency, exceedingly problematical. If grace be not debt, then is it unnecessary to the vindication of justice in the punishment of sin. The Spirit's influence in calling us into a state of salvation by a redeemer, and in opening the heart, that we may discover by the word the way of escape, is an act of distinguishing mercy; but when bestowed, until we know it, it can lay us under no obligations to believe, and obey; yet its direct tendency is to produce these effects. When, nevertheless, the possession of spiritual aids may be reasonably inferred from their fruits, this ought to become a strong incentive to gratitude, praise, and other obedience.*

Grace not
necessary to
justice.

Conscious as the judges of Peter and John

*Vide note F.

The offers
of the gospel
are not to be
restrained to
select char-
acters.

were, that they resisted the truth; and convinced as they ought to have been, that they had murdered the true Messiah; yet were they not too vile to be permitted to hear the offers of salvation. In the same strain were the subsequent proclamations of the gospel by the apostles, who required repentance and faith; which were charges of guilt, and particularly of the rejection of evidence. They demanded not preparatory qualifications of sinners to recommend them; nor did they say, that their belief, that Christ is theirs, would be a reception of him by faith, or always a proof of an interest in his sacrifice. To counsel the discharge of other duties, than of repentance and faith, to those, who are impenitent, is to offer them an excuse, and to misrepresent their condition, as if they were not defective of a heart to believe, whilst they are still enemies to God, and under his curse.

In the ministrations of these heralds of

peace, the want of grace is sometimes imputed to the sinner as his crime; plainly because his enmity, and hatred of holiness, which are chargeable only on himself, are so inveterate, as always to remain until God takes away the heart of stone. This is the seat of the malady, which is merely moral; till the heart is opened to attend, till the man is disposed to receive the truth, objective light addresses the understanding to no saving purpose. Some have alleged it to be in vain to strive, till grace is given; for if we are to be saved, we shall be born of the Spirit, do what we will, and if we are to be lost, we shall never obtain the influence, do what we can. But this objection falsely supposes, man to be the subject of an irresistible necessity to be saved, or lost, let him choose as he may. There can be no doubt, that if we are to be saved, we shall become the subjects of renewing grace, for God is the efficient cause of all things, and this is his course. Also, that future events are certain, is a plain deduction

The reason
of the com-
mand to have
grace.

An answer
to an hack-
neyed objec-
tion against
the efficacy
of grace.

from the perfections of the sovereign proprietor of the universe ; but they follow in the succession of cause and effect ; salvation is consequently not to be expected without holiness, any more than reaping without sowing. Accordingly if salvation be from sin, it cannot obtain without repentance ; but if they who have the offer, do not receive Christ by faith, they remain imimical, and cannot escape ; for all, who submit, are saved ; and those, who do not, destroy themselves. But to affirm, either that any shall perish, because they do not, what they have no power to do ; or that their unbelief is not their fault, is to blaspheme the justice of God.

To attribute foreknowledge to God, which in the first cause of all things can never depend on future events, but must identify itself with his eternal purposes ; and at the same time to hold, that there is no certainty in the events, which are the subjects of his fixed designs, because they depend upon human

Divine fore-
knowledge
depends not
on future
events, but
they are
founded on
eternal pur-
poses.

volitions, and are contingent to us, is absurdly to suppose the liberty, which is necessary to moral agency, to be the same, with an enlargement from the control of the infinite wisdom and power, of the king of providence, and a virtual denial of that government of God, which is acknowledged even by the benighted heathen. The prophecies recorded, and shown in the scriptures to have been accomplished, very plainly discover, in numerous instances, that the voluntary actions of men were known to God, and revealed to his prophets, long before they obtained; and were the means, which he was pleased to adopt, for the accomplishment of his antecedent purposes; but had they been absolutely contingent, it would be a contradiction to say, they were the subjects of a foreknowledge, which necessarily implies certainty.

¶

A conviction of the truth of our opinions, and a conscientious deportment, are too often imagined both equivalent to every duty, and

Man's liberty is secured as a mean of accomplishing God's designs.

Of the authority of conscience, or man's secret judgment of himself.

sufficient for our safety. This is to assume, either that ample means of discrimination, and the necessary evidence of truth, have not been furnished, which is not the fact ; or that the approbation of conscience, is a justification where there is a charge of sin. But our conscientiousness cannot remove the obligation of the law, nor can we establish the authority of our own judgment above the pure precepts, and wise commandments of the eternal law-giver. Such a defence, would warrant the claim of the highest virtue, by the most hardy offenders. Nevertheless the resistance of an erroneous conscience, is not innocence, it being a consent to act against our best subjective light. To us, who are honoured with the grade of intelligents ; constituted subjects of a moral government ; knowing our degradation and the way of escape ; sensible of the shortness, rapidity and precariousness of life, which terminates the period of our trial ; delay is imputable defiance ; refusal, avowed

rebellion ; at which justice never can con-nive without a stain.

Condemnation is the first state of every heir of human degradation ; but this being a provision to open an effectual way of relief, and a safer and more protracted trial, whilst time continues, the harvest is not past, the summer is not ended, nor the door of hope closed. Really to desire life is to possess it, for the heart is changed ; the acceptance or refusal of the blessing is the trial assigned us, the moral character of the disposition is the criterion, and the bent of mind is as effectually tested by believing, as doing. But there is no salvation for those who remain in enmity and guilt ; no pardon contrary to justice ; no justification but by the blood of Christ ; and no certainty of an interest in his sacrifice, but by accrediting his testimony ; “ *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*” Such faith works by love, and this will appear in the deportment. But

The nature
of our trial,
and the dan-
ger of resting
in a mere
profession.

should we conform to every ordinance, without such conviction and affection, we are asleep in carnal security; life passing away in idolatrous attachments; motives becoming weaker; the heart more insensible; the calls of mercy more and more feeble, till they die away on the ear; our guilt accumulating; the storm gathering; and the tremendous day of final account hastening with all its horrors.

The influence of doctrines on practice.

The faith of every professor is conformed to that scheme of doctrine, which he has adopted. If the death of Christ appear to any to have merely rendered man salvable; the faith of such is only historic, for their trust is placed in their own holiness. In the hypothesis of antecedent and consequent blessings, Christ's death is no more than a great moral motive to a nominal repentance, and an unsanctified morality; and faith a vague and general persuasion of the favour of God. But where eternal mercy is held to

be the source; and the purposed sacrifice of Christ, the originally appointed substitution accepted by justice, and the only pleadable ground of salvation, there should exist confident assiance on the sufficiency of the atonement, trust in the faithfulness of God, and joy in the hope of future glory. “*In the Lord have I righteousness and strength:*” “*I know whom I have believed:*” “*I will joy in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.*”

The application, and exercise of reason, in the investigation of religious truth, is a matter of choice, consequent upon a removal of prejudices; and generally indispensable to the production of faith. This implies conviction of sin, and helplessness; a persuasion of the truth of the plan of reconciliation as revealed; and a willingness to accept the terms. The affections of gratitude, love and filial fear, with a ready submission to the cross, are usual characteristics. These, and what-

An ordinary course of conviction and faith.

ever else can prove the truth of a change of disposition, may be considered as evidence of that faith, which implies spiritual, and is a sure precursor of everlasting life.

Guilt must
be wholly re-
moved; moral
pollution in
some degree.

Salvation from the guilt of sin, not the existence of it, must be complete in this world; this is the change of state denominated justification; its consequent change of nature, commencing in regeneration, and advancing in sanctification, is progressive. The influences of the Spirit, in whatever degree, are perfect; but man's rectitude is partial, and defective. Every creature is dependent; and as fresh sustentation is ever necessary, in the kingdom of providence; so is it also in that of grace; for even when a man is renewed in his disposition, without the continuous supplies of the Spirit, temptation will overcome him; but divine aid not being immediately perceptible, in the kingdom of grace, any more than in the kingdom of providence, our work is uninterrupted watchfulness, and

importunate prayer. Were man absolutely free from moral defect, this would cease to be a state of probation, and all cause for humiliation, and repentance, except for the iniquity of the unregenerate, would be removed. But experience discovers, that the higher the attainments of the saints, the more sensible do they become of their remaining imperfections ; poverty of spirit is ever less, than the causes of humiliation ; but perception of vileness is proof of excellence ; a sense of ignorance, an indication of wisdom ; thus their weakness is strength ; and when nothing in themselves, they "*can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth, them.*" A leanness, springing from an exquisite sensibility to sin, sometimes produces an experience, which may furnish, indirectly, a well grounded hope, approximating assurance. But if the liberty, necessary to moral agency, were incompatible with absolute certainty, such contingency would prevent, even divine foreknowledge : render salvation from sin

The holiest
see, and la-
mant imper-
fections.

Christian
paradoxes.

Certainty,
liberty, assu-
rance, and
sin, strangely
concomitant.

uncertain ; and consequently, exclude human assurance. This has nevertheless been often enjoyed, by the “*saved*,” who are so denominated in the new testament,* not merely because members of the visible church, but already, in this life, heirs of the invisible kingdom of glory. Such, not contented to contemplate divine truth by a lively exercise of faith, aspire to the actual possession of the comfortable persuasion of divine favour, founded on clear, and rational views of his promises, and the characteristic traits of those, to whom they are made. The power of godliness is best seen in its influence on practice. Thus ordinances are indispensable, because christians experience their own weaknesses ; their unworthiness renders them poor in spirit, gentle and disposed to favour others ; whilst their love of God moves them to speak, and think, and act to all, as partakers of his goodness. Such are among the

Marks of grace.

* 1 Cor. i. 18, *σωζομένοις*. Ephes. ii. 8, *εργωμένοις*. Titus iii. 5, *εσωτερινούς*.

surest marks of a fitness for the heavenly happiness, and far more credible proofs of true religion, than those impassioned ecstasies, and that furious zeal, which are rarely seen to be the concomitants of real knowledge. Self-examination is the regular mean for gaining such acquaintance with ourselves, yet should it be ever remembered, that true holiness must be our principal, and immediate aim; assurance a secondary, and less important object; otherwise a shadow will obtrude itself, and be taken for the substance.

If “*there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,*” the false religions of the gentiles cannot save them; nor can the truth as it is in Jesus, save those, who preferring ignorance of holy things, live without the knowledge they might gain of its evidence; but if justice require, that our guilt should be deemed proportional to our superior advantages; it must also demand, that none should be held culpable

Guilt is in proportion unto advantages.

for not believing *on him, of whom they have not heard.* Infants may be saved, dying in infancy, by the sacrifice of which they have no knowledge.* Pagans have the traditional idea of that God, in whom they live and move; are surrounded with the proofs of his existence, and perfections, and consequently may be justly condemned for their sins; but as often as they become the subjects of the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, they will "*feel after and find Him.*" (a) Justifying righteousness was accounted unto the father of the faithful, before he received the seal of the covenant, for the encouragement of the heathen, as well as of believers among his descendants. (b) Whom God *justifies he sanctifies*, consequently they who possess the change of heart, or nature, have been received into a state of salvation, holiness being the only credible proof of accep-

Saving blessings may go before the seals of the covenant.

ment of the heathen, as well as of believers among his descendants. (b) Whom God *justifies he sanctifies*, consequently they who possess the change of heart, or nature, have been received into a state of salvation, holiness being the only credible proof of accep-

* Rom. v. 15, *οι πολλοι, and εις τους πολλους,* refer to *επι τους, &c.* in ver. 14.

(a) Acts xvii. 27.

(b) Rom. iv. 10—12.

tance ; but works without faith are dead, and faith without works is a deception. Cornelius though a heathen, had become a subject of grace before Peter's arrival ; and God himself has warned us, that whomsoever he *cleanses*, we have no right to pronounce *common* or unsanctified. If those, to whom the Gospel has not come, be without *excuse*, because they neglect their scanty means of knowledge, and remain ignorant of *the eternal power and Godhead*; (a) it is implied, that if they be not thus ignorant, but have the piety of their father Noah, they may be saved as he was. Yet are they *without hope*, because the traditional revelation, which they have, is now uncertain, and was at first not clear. Sovereignty communicates good only, the loss of the soul is the award of justice, and condemnation can never be without guilt. The untutored savage, though not innocent, may yet put to blush the “stall fed” theologian : and the anathematized infant, the

The heathen
are without
excuse.

(a) Rom. i. 19, 20.

hard hearted bigot, who denies it an interest in the blood of Him, who, whilst pouring it from his veins, said, even of his murderers, "*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*"

The propitiation of Christ was *for the sins of the whole world*. This truth has been sent unto, but has not reached every creature; it cannot be received, where it does not come. To receive it by faith is life; to reject it in unbelief is death; where the talent has not been confided, it has not been abused. To possess the various advantages redounding from a preached gospel, and to remain unconvinced of the truth; and unapprehensive of danger, is a condition vastly more dreadful, than the worst we can imagine, of those, who have only the light of nature. Our superior advantage lies, not in possessing reason, the barbarous nations have this; but whilst they have only tradition, and the works of God, we have also his word, and

'There is no other name by whom the heathen can be saved.'

the proofs necessary to evince, that it is such; thus life and immortality, with us, are brought to light; whilst they live in darkness, and die without hope. Nevertheless until it can be shown, that the heathen have never the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, we are not safe, in consigning them all to perdition; but should rather pity, and help them.

The scheme of redemption, whilst merely in the purposes of God, bore the form of a covenant, in its parties, promises, condition, and blessings. Since the fall, it has been proposed to man for his acceptance, as the only means of life. Believers “*took hold of this covenant by sacrifice;*” under the dispensations of Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses. When Christ, who had in all of them been the object of the faith, and substance of the hope of the saints, was offered up, animal sacrifices were “*taken away;*” and the wine under the “*new covenant,*” or gospel dispensation, represented the same “*blood*” of Christ.

The scheme
of redemp-
tion, though
eternal, ap-
peared as a
covenant.

Consequently the plan of redemption, has been the same in every age; repentance, faith, love, and obedience are duties under every exhibition; and justification, adoption, sanctification, and glory, its permanent blessings.

The dispensations of Noah, Abraham, and Moses are still in force, where the gospel has not come.

The two first dispensations, after the fall, made with Adam and Noah, were for our race, and still are in force, where later ones have not come. Those ratified with Abraham, and Moses, were primarily for the natural seed of Abraham; and still exhibit the only sacrifice, where they have not the gospel. But all these covenants differ only in externals, which do not save, and were never binding on any, but on those, to whom they came. How far therefore the abominations of the heathen can be excused in their dark and hopeless alienation, God alone must decide, nor does it become us, without a divine warrant, to say they can have no mercy in Christ.*

The moral corruption of man, under every

*Vide note G.

dispensation, is evinced by this; that virtue is self control, whilst vice resulting from a defect of rectitude of disposition, is indulgence. A predominance of good can never be fairly deduced, from the external conduct of men; for the heart characterizes action. Also the good intention must neither spring from the restraints of society, nor be founded in personal advantage; nor can the existence, much less the progress of true religion be merely inferred, from the daily suppression of propensities in the pursuit of worldly advantage; nor by an attendance upon the ordinances of religion, for it presents motives of the highest interest; but a change of state is seen by a change of nature. To be secure of this salvation, supposes a holy disposition, under every exhibition of redeeming grace; but especially under that of the Gospel, where all those duties, to which love excites, can be performed, under advantages vastly superior. A renewed disposition, and not mere moral conduct, and charitable deeds,

Corruption
evinced by
the arduous-
ness of vir-
tue.

should be that characteristic, to those who live under the light of evangelical instructions, of which they should be ascertained by credible proofs, before they should be satisfied of their acceptance. Yet the consolations and the hopes of the christian, directly flow from the word and promise of an unchangeable God. To him, the best are never profitable, the sensual are hateful. “*The ploughing of the wicked is sin,*” their good deeds establish not the prevalence of a right disposition. Goodness, founded merely on interest, will obtain no future reward ; men, who repose their safety on it, are self deceivers, and should they *cast out devils*, they must receive the sentence, *depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

Moral agency exists with dependence, liberty with grace; but we are conscious of liberty, not grace.

True holiness is ascribed both in its birth and growth, to the influence of the Spirit, whom Christ hath sent. But moral rectitude is ever man’s duty, which it could not be, if it were impossible to him. Nor are we to

wait for grace, as if it were necessary* to the *discharge of duty*; for then grace is a talent, without which we should be innocent in non-performance. God commands, and he, who persists in refusal, perishes. The sinner has alway the liberty to submit, and become holy; and when he pleases, he does it; but his liberty is not independence, any more in the kingdom of grace, than in that of providence. When he changed from sin to holiness, God changed him; henceforth he will practise not an occasional self denial, or an abandonment of some grosser vices, whilst inward corruption remains in quiet possession of his heart; but he has gained an ascendancy and keeps an anxious watch over his desires and thoughts, maintaining an exterminating conflict with evil in every shape, and an abiding devotedness to God, and dependence upon Christ. Honour, pleasure, riches, and power, exclude from happiness the multitude, and entangle and weaken the best. But judg-

Liberty is
a mean of di-
vine govern-
ment.

*Vide note II.

ment is not ours, fear and trembling become us, *in working out our own salvation.* Knowledge and practice have reciprocal influence, and must accompany each other; thus may they profit us, otherwise they enhance our guilt. Zeal without knowledge, deserves, and must receive the judgment of hypocrisy; and knowledge without zeal, argues its possessor still in his native enmity.

The nature
of the final
judgment.

On that awful morning, every one will come, already so far instructed in the scheme of salvation, as to be prepared to comprehend the work of the day; for the final judgment has been appointed, to reveal the righteousness of God, in saving and condemning. Then man's test will appear, not to have been perfect innocence, because among the myriads of moral agents, then to pass on trial, not one mere man will be found of such description. The general, absolute mercy of God, will produce not a single example of salvation; for sovereignty will never disparage justice.

Reconciliation, in every instance, will appear to have been by that name alone, which Peter announced to his judges. And every soul will know, that salvation had been brought and tendered by the judge; and that the test of real, and cordial submission, lay in accepting the favour, bowing to his government, and returning to our allegiance. Every warning, and every advantage for escape, must be compared with their effects on us; due allowance being made for our infirmities. Every plausible defence will be heard; every just excuse receive the attention, which it deserves; every good deed, however forgotten, or disclaimed by the humble, will be exhibited, and approved; and the salvation of every saint be fully shown to the whole assembly to be just, to the glory of God. When the Judge, turning to the right, shall say; “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.”

Warnings
are talents.

N O T E S.

A. *Page* 15.

OF SIN.

WHEN man first realized existence, he was mature in body and soul, and adorned with a disposition bent to good. An indefectible sustentation would have contravened the designs of his creator ; a state of confirmed rectitude, either of angels or men, being consequent only upon a previous trial, and approbation. Having the command of his own faculties, he would not choose against his inclinations ; yet might he have nourished his holiness, by the influence of motives ; for he possessed all the liberty necessary to moral agency. His preference of subordinate, to the chief good, had no excuse ; for neither did justice require, nor was sovereignty bound to bestow, the effectual support of spiritual aid. Sin, not being any thing positive, did not germinate from man's degradation, into a constituent of a fallen nature ; it was not accession, but defect ; and every ordinary descendant of Adam, is now destitute of that bent of disposition to moral rectitude, which was originally possessed by the protoplast.

If sin were a physical constituent, it must be, not the defect of a thing, but a thing ; not privation, but a something, existing in nature ; and consequently, the effect of a cause. There can, upon this supposition, be no alternative, but either to suppose God its author, or to allow, that it owes its existence to a cause, independent of the first cause. Some of the old definitions of moral evil, justly allege sin to be, “when *original*, a privation rather than a corruption :” “*Actual*, a defect of an action, in defiance of the law of God :” “A declension, or swerving from the law, or will of God :” “Since moral evil is imperfection, and thus defect ; it is therefore not real and positive, but merely privation.”* But because the defect of a right disposition lies beyond human research, laws regard primarily actions ; and moral evil is taken complexly for a disposition defective of righteousness ; for mental or bodily actions contrary to law ; or for their consequences. Sin in such latitude of meaning, admits of variety, in kinds and degrees ; the diversity exists not in the

* Peccatum *originale*—“non ad Deum, quā creator, sed quā judex est, referri debet, et rectius *privatio*, quam *corruptio* vocatur.” “*Actuale* est *defectus* *actionis* cum lege Dei pugnans.”—Wendelin. “*Defectus, declinatio, seu aberratio à lege, seu voluntate Dei.*”—Bucan. “Cum malum morale est imperfectio, adeoque *defectus*, ergo non reale et positivum, sed mere *privativum* est.”—Slapfer. These definitions are in strict accordance with the language of scripture ; ἢ αμαρτία εστιν ἡ ανομία. 1 John iii. 4. *Sin is a want of conformity to law.* Other divines, Rollock, Twisse, &c. describe *sin* as consisting of two things, an act or quality, and a non-conformity to the divine law or will. The first of these, they referred to God as its author ; the latter, being a judicial privation, or defect, and nothing positive, they thought, did not admit of an efficient cause ; but was permitted in the voluntary instrument, who acted, or possessed such quality. In truth the latter only was *sin*, and the former good.

moral privation itself of rectitude, for this is the same, but arises from the thoughts, words and actions of men, whose hearts, or dispositions are destitute of such bent towards God, his law and character. But if, as some imagine, sin consist in action ; and be strictly and simply an act ; when it is past, the party is clear. there is no moral corruption, or pollution ; and consequently when guilt, that is the obligation to punishment, has been removed, the party is fit for heaven without a change. Thus, although a transgressor may be denominated a sinner, because of the act passed ; yet sinful he is not, except during the short period of acting ; also omission is, obviously, innocence. But sin is neither the act of the body, will, understanding, nor even of the man ; for these, except the last, are mere instruments, and as such, not the subjects, either of praise, or blame. To the man only are crimes imputable ; and he it is, who is odious, because his heart, or disposition, is averse from God ; for what his heart is, he is. If its bent be to the chief good, the conduct is right, rect, straight by rule, or conformed to law ; the man possesses moral purity ; and such is his character. If the tendency of the heart be to subordinate good, and especially to that, which is interdicted by law, the man is evil. But if sin had a positive existence, and were a physical constituent of any creature, it would, by that circumstance, be exculpated. If judges deemed sin to consist in actions, these need not to be painfully investigated for the intention of the agents, by scrutinizing circumstances and conduct ; but acts are no more than *prima facie* evidence of criminality, or even of guilt ; and the presumption, which they furnish, is often destroyed. Sin is im-

putable to man ; but, though an agent, he never acts, except in, and by his faculties ; nor is blame, when justly cast, confined to his actions, to the party, merely in the time of acting, nor only after an action ; for if the fixed purpose exist, the man is guilty, before him, who searches the heart. To denominate sin a physical constituent of man's nature, is either to charge it upon God, who made him ; or to account it a mere calamity, a punishment, not an imputation ; but if man be defective of rectitude in the bent of his heart, and consequently averse to duty, and its motives, this is moral impurity, and he deserves punishment, even before any overt act can be charged upon him.

B. *Page 19.*

OF THE FINAL CAUSE OF CREATION.

An intelligent being would not accomplish a great work, without a previous design, or having an end in view. The creator must therefore have designed to create, before he did so ; and pursued an end, or ends, in all his works. Because he is eternal, and immutable, he must always have had the same views and purposes. Consequently the chief end, which he designed in creation, was not a motive producing an effect on him. That his benevolence must produce happiness, is certain ; but that the happiness of creatures was the chief end, or final cause in creation, when as yet there was no creature ; and never had been, is not admissible ; especially also, since events show, that a great portion of intelligent creatures have fallen ; and

many of these are miserable forever, although, he could have made them happy. The happiness of creatures bearing, in point of importance, not the least proportion to his own ; to have pursued it as a chief aim, would have been to have preferred subordinate good. That he made all things for himself, means not a creating for the augmentation of his pleasure ; but for its continuance, in the contemplation of his own glory, and not chiefly for any extraneous good. His works exhibit himself to himself ; neither increasing his knowledge, nor happiness ; for creation is in fact, what he had always seen it in purpose. A mere display of his perfections to his creatures, adds nothing to him, would be an unworthy final cause, and could have been no more than a subordinate end. No event, under any view, can produce the least change in a perfect being ; for this would argue either antecedent or subsequent defect ; he is necessarily immutable. External operation has been accounted essential to infinite benevolence ; were it so, it would follow ; that neither the final cause of creation was in God ; nor has he been eternally benevolent. But all his creatures are in comparison of him nothing ; nor are they, since the creation, either more, or less in his view, than when he was alone. Neither mercy, power, justice, nor truth, could operate *ad extra*, before creation, any more than goodness or benevolence ; yet was Deity then, neither less perfect, nor less happy, than since. God is one, these divisions of his perfections are made for our convenience ; but when we speak of him as a man, and erect theories upon such figurative language, they can be only hypothetical. By creation his excellencies, which had never been latent to himself, were put into

action ; they had been always equally as they now are, and ever must be, the objects of his regards, else his happiness has been mutable. God is the chief good ; if he were to seek our advantage as a better object, we might also seek the same end ; and without profanity pursue our happiness to the subversion, as far as in our power, of his truth, justice, and government. Self-love, in man, prefers a subordinate good ; not so in God ; benevolence, in man, desires a greater good ; not so, in God, if its object be external. But his own glory, the exhibition of himself to himself, is his last end in creation, and in all he does ; and so should it be with us, by actively exercising the talents he has conferred on us, in promoting his designs, in a strict compliance with his revealed pleasure.

C. *Page 31.*

OF THE UNITY AND PLURALITY IN DEITY.

Tradition must have handed down the idea of a self-existent being. The subserviency of things to things, evinces an unity of design in the creation, and leads reflection to one cause. The necessary and absolute perfection of the creator, excludes the idea of division in Deity. That God is one, is also the voice of revelation. Accordingly, there must be but one object of worship, one source of legislative authority, and one being, against whom sin is committed. The scriptures show, nevertheless, a plurality of some kind in God, but no division of essence ; they speak of it, as existing in an eternal commu-

niation, or procession, which is thought to be not derivation. Father, Son, and Spirit, are spoken of as distinct personal characters. Matt. iii. 16. xxviii. 19. 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5, 6. 2 Cor. xiii. 14. Eph. ii. 18. iv. 4, 5, 6. Titus iii. 4, 5, 6. Rom. viii. 11. xv. 16, 17. The Father is spirit, the Son spirit, and the Comforter spirit ; but though each is spiritual, each is not a spirit, for God is a spirit. The wisdom and power, which can create a soul, and body ; and, though of different properties, unite them in one person ; could create, and unite such human nature with a divine person ; for this, and the soul, however great their disparity, are spiritual natures.

When “the Word was made flesh,” John i. 14, neither the Father, nor the Holy Spirit was incarnated. *Was made*, does not mean *was* flesh ; for the previous existence of the Word, when creation began, is asserted in the former verses. None deny the moral character of Jesus Christ, he ought therefore to be believed, when he says ; that, *he came down from heaven*. John iii. 13. vi. 38, 50, 62. xvii. 5. Creative power, which can belong to no creature, is referred to him. “All things were made by him,” John i. 3. “By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth,” Col. i. 16. See Heb. i. 2, 8, 10. Eph. iii. 9. Psa. cii. 25. That he knoweth all things ; appears from John xxi. 17. Mark ii. 8. John ii. 25. vi. 64, and is Almighty ; from Phil. iii. 21. Rev. i. 8. John v. 21, immutable ; from Heb. i. 10, 11, 12. xiii. 8, and is every where, and always ; from Matt. xxviii. 20. When these, and other divine perfections, are predicated of the Son, we must not

suppose, that he is thus perfect, distinctly ; for Deity is one ; and the three, Father, Son, and Spirit, have the same individual nature, the same divine essence ; and are by no means to be understood, as if they were three beings, after the manner of human persons.

There was but one person in Christ, and that in the unexampled sense mentioned ; for the connexion of the natures began at the conception, and his human soul and body never existed alone. These natures were never mixed; but were, and still are. distinct, not confused. The divine nature was ever ubiquitary, and could not be confined to a human soul and body. Yet was his person, like our own, characterized by the higher nature ; and his words and actions, being those of a divine person, are to be esteemed of the utmost importance. It was the human righteousness of the Mediator, thus dignified by the divinity, and not the essential righteousness of God, that complied with his duties as a man ; and was the eternally purposed substitution for us. Being as mediator inferiour, he acknowledged, “my Father is greater than I.” But he also felt his union with the Father ; and when the exertion of his divine power was referred to Beelzebub, he pointed out the dangerous difference, that existed between obloquy spoken against him as a man, and blaspheming his divine spiritual nature, (*πνευματος*, Matt. xii. 31.) As man, he was not God ; as God, he was not man ; for the natures are distinct ; but the properties of each being in the same person, it is probable his human consciousness, always identified itself with his divinity in some way.

That a great deliverer was to come, appears from Gen. iii. 15. xii. 3. xxii. 18. xxvi. 4. xxviii. 14. xl ix. 10. Deut. xviii. 18, 20. Isa. lii., liii., &c. &c. The epistle to the Hebrews explains the ancient worship, and faith; and points the prophetic proofs to him. That to the Romans shows the impossibility of salvation by any law, affirming the only way to be in him; and, more than any other portion of the sacred word, elucidates our connexion, both with the first and second Adam; and exhibits the scheme of redemption, as rising out of the eternal purposes; passing on in every age towards its accomplishment; revealed, with increased lustre, at the judgment; and finally issuing into the everlasting glory of God.

D. *Page 35.*

OF THE FOUNDATION OF DUTY.

As God is the source of all existence, so is he of all excellence; his purposes, of which he gives no account, being the rule of his own conduct, are conformed to his own moral purity; and every expression of his will towards his creatures, as a rule for their conduct, being also the ground of their obligation to obey him, partakes of the characteristic ethical excellence of his own nature. Although he has connected advantage with our duty, and made it a lawful motive; yet must we never esteem the reward, more highly, than the virtue recompensed; nor substitute utility for moral excellence; for his gifts bear no comparison with himself. Intention, not action, is performance; thus,

where a creature possesses some portion of intelligence, without a moral sense, it is free from law ; and liable to no imputation of defect of virtue ; its designs have no moral character, yet the injuriousness of its actions may be extreme. To search for a foundation of the obligation to be virtuous, independently of the eternal God, seems to be an approximation unto the dangerous work of searching for a god, paramount to the true God. If the chief good be happiness, and virtue mere advantage, vice may become virtue ; provided utility can take the side of vice, and be its reward. The rule of our conduct is law, and this is the expression of the divine will, which is the supreme authority, and of the highest excellence ; for his moral as well as his natural perfections are infinite, immutable, and eternal. An erroneous conscience is our own mistaken judgment of our conduct, by what we deem the law of God ; to resist such conscience is a consent to disobey him ; and therefore such consent, even where we ignorantly conform to the law, is justly deemed sin ; which it could not be, if utility, imagined fitness, or any thing, except his authority were the foundation of our obligation to be virtuous ; nor would it be obedience. Yet a disposition to obey God, though often accepted without the act, will not excuse vincible ignorance ; Saul after his apostleship accounted himself to have sinned, whilst persecuting the church according to the guidance of his mistaken conscience, or judgment. If the reason or nature of things, considered independently, or without the will of God, were the foundation of duty ; it was no more the duty of Abraham to offer up Isaac, after, than, before the divine command. But if that positive precept could make it fit

for a father to slay his son ; the divine prohibition of manslaying, must have been the cause, that it was previously unfit. If things are no more fit in themselves, than they exist of themselves ; it is absurd to ask, if God can make that fit to be done, which was unfit in itself. If all perfection is essential to God, and thus eternal, it is improper to speak of any thing, as right or wrong, fit or unfit, antecedently to Him ; or as a reason of his purposes. To seek for a higher foundation of human obligation, than the will of God, is to call in question his authority : and to imagine an *absolute fitness* of things prior to their existence, to which even God must conform, is to renounce his supremacy and deity.

E. Page 43.

OF JUSTICE IN THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE GUILTY.

Rom. iii. 25. *Whom*, that is Christ, *God hath set forth, προεθέτω,* before appointed, or hath openly exhibited, *a propitiation, ιλαρτηπιον*, viz., *θυμα*, a propitiatory sacrifice, *through faith in his blood*, to all, who put their faith in the veracity of God's promise, and the merit of Christ's sufferings and death ; *to declare his righteousness*, for the manifestation of God's rectitude in his dealings with man ; or rather, his way of justifying, or accepting man as if righteous ; *for the remission of sins, that are past, through the forbearance of God*, by (*δια*) not punishing sins, committed in (*εν*) the time, that he delayed sending the ransom ; (v. 26,) *to declare at this time his righteousness*, I mean, that the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, exhibits, now under the Gospel.

his way of justification, which was then the same ; or the righteousness of his conduct in every age ; *that he might be just, and the justifier of him, who believeth in Jesus* ; that his justice may now at last have its demands, even when God is justifying, or accepting as if righteous, him, whosoever he may be, who puts his confidence for acceptance in the saviour.

God is immutably just and holy ; yet he, who will never justify a fallen angel, for a single transgression, did receive, and bless with eternal life, the patriarchs, who sinned on many points. Wherefore, to discover the verity of his righteousness, which was still the same in the time of patience, *εὐχή*, he has now placed before the eyes of the universe, *προεθέτω*, the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. His objects were, both that he might be *just*, *εἰς τοὺς εἰναὶ αὐτὸν δικαιοῦ*, even when justifying him, who is of the faith of Jesus ; and that he might *manifest his justice*, *πρὸς εὐδειξίν της δικαιοσύνης*, in this latter time. In what sense God is said to be just, when justifying through Christ, is a question of vast concern to the church in our age. This word is used for God's *distributive justice*, Rev. xvi. 7, in both its kinds ; *remunerative*, 2 Tim. iv. 8, and *punitive*, Rev. xvi. 5. It is taken generally for his *righteousness in his dealings with men*. John xvii. 25. 2 Thes. i. 6, and for *his own rectitude*, 1 John ii. 29 and iii. 7. In the passage paraphrased, the blood of Christ, appears to have been appointed and exhibited, not merely, that God should show his mercy, or even his faithfulness to his promises ; but that *he might be just* ; the blood of Christ being, by virtue of the purpose of substitution, *demanded*

by justice. The innocence of Christ, though necessary to his sacrifice, would have prevented his sufferings, had they not been vicarious ; *when he, God, made him to be a sin offering, who knew no sin,* 2 Cor. v. 21, there was no compulsion, for this would have been injustice. But the government of this world, and the divine laws were subsequent to the purpose of the substitution of Christ ; and every soul, that had been saved before his death, was an additional demand of public justice upon the surety, who had taken their place. It is in justifying the sinner, that this propitiatory sacrifice, was the demand of justice. The apostle does not refer the awful sacrifice of Christ, by which believing sinners are redeemed from eternal miseries, to the abounding mercy of God, as he might have done ; for to God, as a sovereign, must be referred ultimately every thing in nature, grace, and glory ; but as Jesus Christ by becoming the surety for sinners, placed himself at the bar of the righteous governor, in a character, sovereignly determined in the councils of eternity, to be assumed in time, and supported with indefectible propriety, and the highest dignity ; it was called for by the occasion, that the apostle should allege, that the sacrifice of Christ was demanded *by the justice of God.*

The promulgation of law was a pledge, that its honour should be supported ; that is, the establishment of a government was a security, that public justice should have retribution, when the laws should be broken. To pardon the guilty in a perfect government, is a violation of public justice. But if the law was made under the reservation, that a substitute of commensurate

standing, who had a right to offer his life, should be accepted ; the law could claim no more ; and justice to the rights of God is satisfied. In such case, the sinner remains such, until sanctified ; his sins are not transferred ; but his guilt, that is his obligation to suffer for his iniquity, is laid upon his surety, and from thenceforth *there is no condemnation*, for the principal.

To justify in the gospel, not the forensic sense, is a judicial act, in which God does not pronounce a man to be in himself righteous ; but merely delivers him from condemnation, for Christ's sake, *as if* the sinner were righteous ; and afterwards, in order of nature, but not always of time, he renews, sanctifies, and prepares him for heaven. Man is justified by faith, which is not the Lord's instrument in passing the sentence of justification ; but every one, who is justified, that is changed with respect to his condition, is also sanctified, that is transformed in his nature, or bent of disposition, and will believe, as soon as the evidence is seen. Then, but not before he believes, has he a right to account himself justified. Thus he is said to be justified by faith ; it being his first credible evidence, of a union unto Christ, or of sanctification by his spirit.

F. Page 57.

OF GRACE.

Common grace is a phrase, used to express divine influences of the ordinary kind, which man is supposed to improve, or

resist ; and which, if opposed, or neglected, produce neither faith, obedience, nor any other advantage. That all holiness, is the effect of an immediate operation of the divine spirit, changing the heart, is a truth, plainly revealed. But until it can be proved, that sanctifying influences had been immediately communicated to those, who have died in impenitency : or until it can be shown, from the word of God ; that men, who remain in an unregenerate state, are made holy, in some degree, by the Spirit, and perform right actions, from pure motives ; it seems to be too problematical to be admitted, that divine, immediate, and imperceptible, influences may be repelled, and the gratuitous efforts of the Almighty defeated. Neither the expression, common grace, nor any equivalent phrase, has been found in the scripture ; and until the thing can be shown, the idea ought, however necessary to an hypothesis, to be received with caution, and its consequences duly weighed. As long as a man's disposition, is adverse to holiness, it is repugnant to imagine, that he performs any holy obedience, or acceptable service. But if such have, and improve, common grace : they are in this respect independently good ; for this improvement is a species of moral excellence in the unregenerate, superadded by themselves, and comes not from God. But the scriptures show, that until man's heart is rectified, he does and will misapply his faculties. He is, by nature, subjected to a privation of the primitive rectitude of the first parent ; and although he might perform all his duty, if he were disposed to yield to proper motives, and has, therefore, no excuse before God, or man ; yet such is the moral defect of his heart, and consequent aversion from spiritual things,

and propensity to earth ; that, for a right disposition, he is in every instance of a change, debtor to the secret, gratuitous, sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit.

That spiritual influence, which is immediate, internal, imperceptible, and which purifies the heart, is denominated grace. So all the means of salvation, and the thing itself, are grace, but being external, and perceptible, they have been called objective grace. This may be resisted, and frustrated ; and the obstinate wills of men do oppose and reject good motives, important truths, and every other moral mean. The influences of the spirit, are never objective, to him, who partakes of them, and, consequently, not submitted to his choice, either for compliance, or resistance ; but the mind is, with respect to them, always passive ; whilst they, being acts of sovereignty, not of justice, are as much beyond man's control as the winds. Being a faculty, the will follows, and sustains the character of, the disposition ; upon this the Holy Spirit operates immediately, and motives mediately, through the understanding ; yet neither is the will, nor the understanding, more than an instrument. No claim exists on sovereignty, for then divine aid would be our right, and improperly termed grace. Justice is never infringed, by gifts to the redeemed ; liberty in all is safe, and the moral agent ever accountable for his choice.

If a previous gift of common grace, be necessary to vindicate divine justice, in condemning the wicked ; an hypothesis as unsupported, as irreconcilable with the divine character, and

government ; the graceless are innocent, the ground of obligation is changed ; moral depravity and inability are alleviations, if not a valid excuse ; and the fullest possession of powers, talents, and advantages, can never lay a man under obligation, either to believe or obey.

There is an old distinction, between grace operating, and co-operating ; which, though not strictly correct, because man is independent in no action, yet is wholly at variance, with the supposition of common grace. Thus, Augustine says;—“*ut velimus operatur; cum autem volamus, ut perficiamus, nobiscum co-operatur.*” In effecting that change of disposition, which is denominated regeneration, and which precedes the right application of the physical faculties, the Spirit operates and man is passive ; but in the exercise of the will, in applying the understanding to the investigation of truth, and in consenting to good, he co-operates with the human agent. But the co-operation, which is supposed by Augustine to be by an influence on the faculties, is either a sustentation of providence ; or effected immediately through the renewed disposition. Man sows, irrigates, and reaps ; yet the success is from the secret influence of the God of nature, who is alone self-existent. So when the Lord sanctifies with the word of truth, there is a providential concurrence ; but, without his immediate spiritual influence on the disposition, the means would be unsuccessful.

Morus, the successor of Spanheim in the divinity chair at Geneva, exemplified this doctrine in Patl. “*Solus Paulus*

ante vocationem ; sola gratia in vocatione ipsa ; nec solus Paulus, nec sola gratia post vocationem fuit." Before regeneration Paul was alone ; in the moment of regeneration, grace was alone ; after regeneration, neither was Paul alone, nor grace alone. When Paul is thus said to have been alone, independence is not meant, his soul was kept alive, and all his mental faculties sustained by his creator ; and this was grace, for it was gratuitous. So also his evil purposes may have been restrained, by that, which is denominated preventing grace ; for the hearts of the wicked, are not beyond the confines of the divine government. But restraint of evil, the production of material good, and extraordinary gifts for the benefit of others, are neither regenerating, nor sanctifying influences, nor productive of any change in the heart. The wicked are wholly such, their carnal, inimical minds do nothing spiritually good, and justice is clear in their condemnation, without the supposition of a common ineffectual grace. But if spiritual aid were necessary to the vindication of justice ; that, which is ineffectual, and inadequate, would not help the case, if man really wants power ; nor justify his condemnation. If such grace be improved by the sinner, the improvement is, by the supposition, independent of God ; man makes himself to differ, and is therefore intitled to the glory. To the question ; "Is grace resistible?" The answer is affirmative, if by grace be meant offers, motives, evidence, or any other objective means of salvation ; also, if by grace be intended any of the christian duties, as repentance, faith, love, hope, joy, and prayer, it may be resisted. But the answer must be negative, if grace mean, immediate, internal,

unperceived, sanctifying operations of the Spirit on the minds of men. Immediate influence, is not proposed as an object, not perceptible, and, consequently, neither resistible, nor improvable ; but, in every instance, efficacious, to the extent of the purpose of the giver, in changing the disposition, or imparting to it, that bent to moral rectitude, which, according to its degree, will direct the voluntary powers of the man. Many passages of sacred writ, have been unjustly deemed proofs of a common influence. “ Work out your own salvation—for it is God, that worketh in you :” Phil. ii. 12, 13, was not spoken to the unrenewed, but to those who “ obeyed alway.” “ Quench not the Spirit :” 1 Thes. v. 19, was directed to those, who had received extraordinary gifts ; which were sometimes bestowed, without changing the heart. Also where regeneration has obtained, faith, and other duties, are pursued with different degrees of ardour : and those, who relax their efforts, so far extinguish the vitality they had received. In like manner, 2 Tim. i. 6—“ stir up the gift,” may be understood either of the office of the evangelist, or of his extraordinary powers. “ Receive not the grace of God in vain,” 2 Cor. vi. 1, may be referred to the ministerial office, the gospel message, or even to miraculous gifts. The Comforter was to come, and reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment : John xvi. 8, this he has done generally by the inspired apostles ; and personally in the saints. “ My Spirit shall not always strive with man,” Gen. vi. 3, is meant of an objective striving ; which is always resisted. “ you do always resist the Holy Ghost,” except by those, who are the subjects of his internal operations. Such general invitations as

occur in Isa. Iv. 1, Matt. xi. 28, John vii. 37, Rev. xxii. 17, do not prove an immediate common influence on the minds of all ; but suppose men to be alike free from restraint, and constraint ; except from the willing bondage of their own sinful dispositions. To suppose the influences of the Spirit to be awarded by justice, is a denial that they are grace, and that God, as a sovereign, may do with his own as he pleases. Justice requires, that man should have every physical advantage, for which he is to account. But a right disposition is the accomplishment of duty ; and constitutes an item to the credit of him, who has it ; if this be also furnished, it is an aid, which is purely gratuitous ; not a talent, but the improvement. Also, because it is precisely what man ought to effect, and is voluntary, he must naturally deem his virtue to be more peculiarly his own than any thing ; and, like the ancient Stoics, think his happiness to be self-originated, and man a divinity to himself. But to imagine, that because men possess every necessary faculty, and advantage, for the service of God, they will be changed by mere moral suasion, is to mistake the human character ; it is the Lord, that *opens the heart* ; it is God, who *always causeth us to triumph* ; the gospel is a *ministration of the spirit*, which is *poured out from on high*, and he that asketh this blessing, has it ; whilst he that never had it, never really sought it. Thus man's guilt lies at his own door ; but when he sees, and feels it aright, he escapes, and gives the glory to God.

But the Antinomian feels no sorrow for sin, whilst he ascribes his salvation to distinguishing special grace : and the

Arminian discovers no occasion for repentance ; further, than he thinks he has resisted that common grace, which he might have improved. These opposite schemes agree in this error ; that, without grace, there is no duty, and consequently no sin, and no cause for sorrow. But the very term speaks gratuitousness, and the justice of final condemnation, if the influences of the spirit were never bestowed. Yet this could not be, if man were the subject of an excusable inability.

G. *Page 74.*

OF THE SALVATION OF THE HEATHEN.

A sentiment has been strongly expressed on this subject, and again the reverse, with equal confidence, in numerous instances, by different preachers, from the same desk. When a presbytery are of opinion, that the scriptures have not asserted the doctrine of the unceremonious damnation of the heathen ; they ought to allow this exception when required, either at licensure or ordination.* The difficulty lies in the answer to

* When the Westminster confession and catechisms, were received by the presbyterian church in America, and adopted by a synodical act, in 1729, it was with this proviso ; "And in case any minister of the Synod, or any candidate for the ministry, shall have any scruple, with respect to any article, or articles of said confession ; he shall, in time of making said declaration, declare his scruples to the Synod, or Presbytery ; who shall notwithstanding, admit him to the exercise of the ministry, within our bounds, and to ministerial communion, if the Synod, or Presbytery, shall judge his scruples not essential, or necessary in doctrine, worship, or government." "The act of Synod in 1729, was the basis—of union," in 1758. But the dis-

question 60, of the larger catechism. The correct answer to be presented to it, must be in the negative, for it is certainly true, that no obedience of ours to any law can save us. The assembly's answer, in denying salvation to be in any other, but Christ, is also true. But so far as it does, though indirectly, affirm, that faith is required of those, who never have heard the evidence, it is neither supported by the scriptures, nor by reason. Rom. x. 14, 15, only proves, that the gospel should be sent. 2 Thes. i. 8, 9, is written against troublers of the saints; and supposes a resistance of light. John viii. 24, was spoken to those, who rejected Christ. Mark xvi. 16, is pronounced of all, who shall refuse the message of the apostles. Not one of these supposed proofs was designed, originally, to touch the subject. The other recited proofs, with the declaration of Peter, which is the subject of this essay, all show the important truth, that salvation is only through Christ. But during the Mosaic dispensation, gentiles, who had not the law, might do by the light of nature, the things contained in the law; Rom. ii. 14, and the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law; ver. 26, yet was their righteousness not deemed a pleadable ground of salvation, for such admission would have conflicted with the argument of the apostle; but if such righteousness was supposed to be the effect of grace, his argument is safe: and Jews and gentiles are alike driven to Christ for refuge. The apostle probably alluded to such gentiles, as the Kenites,

cretionary powers of a presbytery, in trying those, whom they are to ordain, are secured to them by the word of God, and can neither be taken away, nor abandoned.

who went up with the tribe of Judah ; vide Judges i. 16, iv. 11. 1 Sam. xv. 6. Of the same sort are the Rechabites to this day, who have descended from Hemath, who was also the father of the Kenites, 1 Chron. ii. 55. These children of Rechab, were not Jews, and did not go up with Israel into Canaan, but then lived in Arabia, and still dwell in the mountainous tropical country, to the north east of Medina. These gentiles, to this hour, worship the true God, and enjoy the blessing pronounced on them, Jer. xxxv. 19. “*Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me forever.*” They are called the Beni Khiabar, sons of Heber, probably as Abraham was, because he had come over the river, to Arabia, the *western* land ; and are by mistake accounted to be Jews. Neighbuhr says (Travels, 2 vol. p. 43,) “The most remarkable, and least known, of these highland communities, is that which the *Jews* have formed upon the mountains lying to the N. E. of Medina. That tract of country is called Khiabar, and the *Jews*, inhabiting it, are known in Arabia by the name of Beni Khiabar. They have independent Schiecks of their own, and are divided into three tribes ; Beni Misseed, Beni Schahan, Beni Anaeffe.”

“ It does not appear, that the *Jews* of Khiabar keep up any intercourse with *their brethren*, who are dispersed over Asia. When I asked the Jews in Syria, concerning them ; they told me, that those *false brethren* durst not claim their fellowship, for they did not observe the law.”

“ These *Jews* cannot accompany a caravan, because their religion permits them not to travel on the sabbath. Yet the

country, which they inhabit, is surrounded with vast and sandy deserts, that unless with a caravan, so sequestered a tract cannot be safely, either left or entered."

Jonadab, the son of Rechab, lived B. C. 878, 2 Kings x. 15. Nearly 300 years afterwards, when their country was invaded, they fled to Jerusalem for safety; but they returned, and have ever lived in the same manner, as shepherds in tents, worshiping the true God, and observing the sabbath. The excellent missionary, Joseph Wolfe, enquired for them, (Journal, p. 234.) "I have heard of *Jews* (in Neighbuhr's travels) who are wandering about like Arabs, near Mecca; do you know of them?"

Rabbi Mose Secot. They are called the Beni Khaibr. I was rejoiced to perceive, that they are known by the Jews at Jerusalem, under the very name, which Neighbuhr gave them; and I asked Rabbi Mose Secot, whether those Beni Khaibr ever came to Jerusalem?

Rabbi Mose Secot. In the time of Jeremiah the prophet they came hither."

Wolfe. "How do you know this?"

Rabbi Mose Secot. Let us read the prophet Jeremiah. He then read Jeremiah xxxv. 1 to 11." "*The word, which came to Jeremiah, from the Lord, in the days of Jehoiachim, the son of Josiah, King of Judah, saying; Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of*

the Rechabites. And I brought them into the house of the Lord, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaiah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah, the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door. And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites, pots full of wine, and cups; and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. But they said, We will drink no wine; for Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying; Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons forever. Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any; but all your days, ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, our father, in all, that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; nor to build houses for us to dwell in, neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed; but we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done, according to all, that Jonadab, our father, commanded us. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon, came up into the land, that we said; come, and let us go to Jerusalem, for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem."

"You see by this," says Wolfe, "that Rabbi Mose Secot is quite certain, that the *Beni Khebar* are descendants of the *Rechabites*: to this present moment, they drink no wine, and have neither vineyard, nor field, nor seed; but dwell, like Arabs in tents, and are wandering nomades. They believe, and ob-

serve the law of Moses by tradition, for they are not in possession of the written law."

In this Mr. Wolfe is mistaken, their tradition is like those of Melchisedec, and Job, and Jethro, who was cotemporary with them, and of the same stock; not like that of the Pharisees. That Rechab was not a descendant of Israel; and that the Rechabites are not Jews, is established by 1 Chron. ii. 55. These strictly pious people who are worshippers of the true God, more than three thousand five hundred years, still under the Noachic dispensation, and who were in the days of Jeremiah approved, and blessed of God, in his temple, whither they had been invited by his command, have, according to his promise "*never wanted a man to stand before the Lord.*" The question is now a simple one; are these heathenish pious worshippers of the true God, who have no scriptures, and no knowledge of Christ, all to be lost; and debarred of an interest in him, of whom they have not heard?

The greater portion of mankind have not yet had the offer of Christ, but they pass through their state of trial, and are to be judged. Must they be all swept off to perdition, for not believing that, which, it has been impossible for them to believe? Neither revelation, nor reason, unless we are greatly mistaken, affirms this.

II. Page 77.**OF UNREGENERATE DUTIES, SO CALLED.**

The words, “*as if it were necessary to the discharge of duty, for then grace is a talent, without which, we should be innocent in non-performance.*” may to some appear unwarrantable; on which account, it first occurred, to remove them. But because the admission that grace is necessary to the performance of *duty, as such*, produces a bad effect, in hardening the impenitent, by furnishing the plea of impotency, it seemed better to explain. The co-operation, or rather operation, of providence in every act, mental, and bodily, few will deny. Also, since all good comes from God, that, which man effects, must be from him; no moral good, or duty, being at any time performed without grace. But neither in natural, nor moral action, is the divine concurrence, immediately perceptible: consequently, for man to delay obedience, till he has obtained the spiritual aid, which shall change his disposition, and produce a desire of compliance, is to renounce obligation, and continue in sin, until something has been done, which it is impossible he should know to have been accomplished, except by performing such obedience. Which to admit, is also to confess, that no unrenewed man can be guilty of the sin of omission; since, by the supposition, non-performance is innocence, so long as spiritual aid is withholden. But that all men, as moral agents, are accountable, is the testimony equally of reason, conscience, revelation, and mankind.

For the moral good, which obtains in man's discharge of his duty, we are debtors ; but such spiritual aid, is derived imperceptibly, that it may not remove liberty ; for then would it destroy the morality of our actions. Such influence is neither *in*, nor *by* the word ; but distinct, even when simultaneous with it ; for the scriptures illuminate objectively, and are thus *able to make wise unto salvation*. But if the word were imperfect, and such co-operation of grace were *necessary* to discover our duty, it would be an inspiration of suggestion ; and also cease to be gratuitous ; for if our ignorance were invincible, *non-performance would be innocence*. But such influence is probably neither an operation of the Spirit on the understanding, nor will ; nor on any other mental faculty ; for if it were, and were *necessary* to enable us to accomplish what is required, then the previous want of power would have excused, and non-performance without it, must have been innocence. The sanctifying operation of the Spirit, is upon the heart, that is, the disposition of the moral agent : and supplies the defect of a bent to moral rectitude. Without such grace, no man ever does any good ; yet the want of a heart is our fault ; and because such aid, is to supply a defect of disposition, not of power, it is not necessary to be conferred on man, either in order to *his discharge of duty*, or to place him under a moral obligation to do it ; but is purely gratuitous, and thus correctly denominated grace. Since man is moral, and accountable without it ; and possesses all advantages qualifying him for the accomplishment of every precept, by which his Creator has bound him ; neglect incurs guilt ; and it will not lie in his mouth to say, at the judgment, “ grace was necessary to the dis-

charge of the duties laid upon me, and that grace was not given." Nevertheless, the necessity is acknowledged, cheerfully, in respect of the divine efficiency, which produces every good in the natural and moral world, according to sovereign pleasure, and no more is intended, than to allege, that in every duty, as such, for which man is to account, there is no defect, but in himself.

It has been absurdly contended, that as God requires holiness in heart, word, and life; and the unregenerate are unholy in all; he requires not *them* to do any thing; "for what can they do, but sin and be damned!" But if they be free from obligation, as they must be, if destitute of every talent, they are also clear of guilt, entirely innocent; and do what they will, neither transgression, nor defect, can ever be charged upon them, nor they brought into danger. That no unregenerate duties are commanded, may be true, for the terms imply a contradiction; but certainly unregenerate men are required to perform duties which are holy. Nor can their indisposition, or want of a heart, furnish them the least excuse, however modified, by the obtuse, and the perverse, into an inability; in refutation of which, there has been substituted the expression moral inability, a phrase obviously self-contradictory, but which means, in common acceptation, really no inability, or want of power, but merely of inclination. The authority of the legislator is rightful, the obligation of his laws upon his intelligent, and lawful subjects, is not mediate, but immediate, and suspended upon no conditions. If regeneration were a pre-requi-

site to duty, the knowledge of the attainment would also be such ; this circumstance, and the defectiveness of the best men, would soon drive the ordinances of religion out of the world. In every duty the heart is required ; yet if obligation be not immediate, but suspended upon an opinion to be formed of our preparedness to yield spiritual obedience, there is a general indulgence. Nevertheless unerring wisdom rightly demands immediate, perfect obedience, whatever may be our moral character, our desires, or views.

Still it may be alleged, that without newness of life, there is no prayer, for since *every one who asketh, receiveth* ; no answer argues there has been no petition. Right prayer does proceed from the heart, and nothing else is duty, or at all required ; and to no other, is an answer promised. But there is neither real excellence, nor merit, in the best prayer ; and when it is granted, that which is received is of favour. If the holiest express nothing that deserves to be heard ; who has a right to limit the Almighty as to others ? Or to say, that his grace, which, as often as conferred, is bestowed on the unworthy, may not reach the unregenerate petitioner ? Prayer, in this respect, stands upon the same ground, as every other duty. As on the one hand no good is promised to the unrenewed, whilst such ; so on the other, we have no right to bar the kingdom against them ; or discourage their applications for mercy. But since both law and gospel require the service of the heart ; and God accepts nothing less, that servant acts without authority, and at his own peril, who lowers his master's terms,

and encourages sin, in the name of duty; or advises delay in obedience, under the unhallowed pretext of waiting for grace.

FINIS.

PRESIDING PRESBYTERS

of the first presbyterian church, Philadelphia.

From 1701, The Rev. Jedediah Andrews,	unto 1747.
The Rev. Samuel Hemphill,	1735.
1739, The Rev. Robert Cross, A. M.	1766.
1752, The Rev. Francis Alison, D. D.	1779.
1759, The Rev. John Ewing, D. D.	1802.
1801, The Rev. John B. Linn, D. D.	1804.
1806, James P. Wilson.	

The Deacons (or Elders) who have deceased.

William M'Ilvain,	John Lisle,
Charles Thomson,	Robert Bailey,
John Fullerton,	James Stewart,
James Hunter,	Hugh Henry,
Robert Smith,	John Connelly,
Robert Taggart.	And others unknown.

THE PRESENT DEACONS.

Alexander Fullerton,	Ambrose White,
David Lapsley,	James Moore,
Alexander Purves.	George Morris.







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